

5. Glossary

TERMS

Action Class

Action classes refer to the degree of revision peer reviewers believe project plans need. The action classes correspond to the extent of peer reviewers' recommendations and are meant to give ARS management an overall idea of the quality of project plans.

Current Research Information System (CRIS)

An electronic system for the filing and retrieval of information about individual agricultural research projects. All ARS research projects are part of the CRIS and are assigned a CRIS number.

Independent (Peer Reviewer)

A peer reviewer is said to be independent of the project plan if he or she was not involved in the plan being reviewed and has no benefit from the funding of the project. Furthermore, independent peer reviewers must have no conflicts of interest with project plans that they review. Independent peer reviewers ensure that a project plan is impartially reviewed.

Research Unit

The ARS unit performing the research that is subject to peer review. Research leaders scientifically and administratively manage ARS labs. Typically, a lab is comprised of 5-10 scientists, support staff, and several temporary student and postdoctoral employees. Most labs are associated with a specific ARS Institute or Center that also provides direction. The program and mission of the lab is often limited. Discipline or program gaps might be filled by collaboration with other labs in ARS or elsewhere.

National Program Staff (NPS)

The NPS serves the Administrator of ARS in developing and coordinating research plans and strategies on a national basis. The NPS sets National Program directions, establishes priorities, and allocates resources. Considerable interaction with Area Directors, stakeholders, and scientists is required to successfully accomplish the NPS's mission. The NPS is composed of approximately 40 research scientists plus support personnel located in Beltsville, MD.

National Program Action Plan

A document written as a result of the issues raised by Congress, stakeholders, and researchers associated with a particular National Program. The Action Plan addresses 1) Rationale and Purpose for the Program; 2) Background; 3) Program Components; 4) Anticipated Outcomes/impacts Over 5 Years; and 5) Research Objectives by Program Component.

National Program Overview

A presentation or document given to peer reviewers to discuss the components, objectives, and relationships between projects associated with a particular National Program. The National Program Overview is provided in support of the National Program's Action Plan.

Panel Chair

The facilitator and manager of a peer review panel. Panel chairs must meet the same expertise, confidentiality, and freedom of conflicts of interests requirements as peer reviewers. They are often sought as panel chairs because of their facilitation skills and supreme knowledge of other experts in their field. Panel chairs are responsible for retaining peer reviewers for their panel, becoming knowledgeable of ARS's peer review criteria and other policies, managing the peer review meetings, and validating the final peer review recommendations.

Peer Review

The process by which independent and expert reviewers assess a research project plan for scientific and technical quality and suitability of approach to achieve a stated National Program.

Peer Reviewer

An individual designated by ARS as qualified and capable of independently and critically assessing the scientific and technical quality of a research project plan and assigned to do so for one or more ARS research project plans. Peer reviewers may be an ARS scientist or non-ARS scientist.

Peer Review Recommendation

A document submitted by a peer review panel that contains a critical review of an ARS research project plan. Recommendations contain input from all members, but do not necessarily reflect a consensus of recommendations.

Primary National Program

The National Program in which a CRIS project is focused. ARS allows a research project to be coded to no more than two National Programs. The primary National Program must be assigned as either 60, 70, 80, or 100%. The corresponding secondary National Program would be assigned as 40, 30, or 20%. Nevertheless, projects may be related to other National Programs and so described by the National Program Staff in their National Program Overview.

Primary Reviewer

A peer reviewer assigned to perform a comprehensive and extensive review of a particular research project plan based upon applicable scientific or subject matter expertise. A primary reviewer is responsible for reading and assessing the project plan in-depth, documenting detailed recommendation for improvement if warranted, and when applicable, leading panel discussions about the project plan.

Secondary National Program

See definition of “Primary National Program.”

Secondary Reviewer

A peer reviewer assigned to perform a comprehensive and extensive review of a particular research project plan based on applicable scientific or subject matter expertise. A secondary reviewer is responsible for reading and assessing the project plan thoroughly, documenting detailed recommendations for improvement if warranted, and participating actively in panel discussions about the project plan. The secondary reviewer reads and edits the final recommendations written by the primary reviewer. The secondary reviewer may act as the primary reviewer in his or her absence.

Scientist Year (SY)

The effort of a research scientist for one year. Fractional efforts in a given project are possible when a scientist is involved in more than one project during the course of a fiscal year. The term is also used in ARS as a synonym for a research scientist.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CRIS	Current Research Information System
NPL	National Program Leader
NPS	National Program Staff
NPT	National Program Team
OSQR	Office of Scientific Quality Review, pronounced “Oscar.”
SQR Officer	Scientific Quality Review Officer
SY	Scientist Year

Comments
for Section 13
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